# Chapter Seven:                                    Draft.2

# Land Use

## Background

This element is based on the statutory requirement for a compilation of goals, objectives, maps, and policies to guide the future development of the County. The land use element also provides a brief explanation of planning resources, implementation tools, an inventory and analysis of land uses, a future land use analysis, and concludes with county goals, objectives, and policies. The Land Use Element is based on locally adopted land use plans. Each local plan provides additional information specific to that town or city Plan and should be referenced for land use decisions.

### *Previous Plans and Studies*

### Oneida County Comprehensive Plan, 2013

The County's former Comprehensive Plan was created by the County's Planning and Zoning Committee with assistance from NCWRPC. The 2013 Plan's Land Use chapter recommended providing enough infrastructure and developable land to meet demand and maintaining the comprehensive plan to ensure an adequate supply of developable land would be available while balancing property rights.

### Regional Livability Plan, 2015

Land use is one of the four elements included in the Regional Livability Plan (RLP), adopted by NCWRPC in 2015. The Land Use Assessment Report, a component of the plan, looks in detail at the land uses throughout the ten-county region and identifies issues and trends related to land use: housing density and farmland preservation. The two land use goals of the plan are as follows:

- Preserve and protect the Region's landscape, environmental resources and sensitive lands while encouraging healthy communities.
- Manage and reduce vacant land and structures.

## Other County Plans

The County has a variety of other specialized plans which influence the comprehensive plan. These are:

- Oneida County Land & Water Resource Management Plan, 2019: The primary intent of this plan is to identify strategies to protect the quality and quantity of the County's soil and water resources.
- Oneida County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2023: This plan's primary purpose is to identify how to prevent injury and property damage from natural and manmade hazards. It was created by the County Public Safety Committee with assistance from NCWRPC.
- Oneida County Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2019-2023: This plan's primary purpose is to identify existing recreational facilities and identify needed facilities for a five-year period. This Plan was created by the County's Forestry, Land, & Recreation Committee with assistance from NCWRPC.
- 15-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2021-2035): Although this plan sounds similar to this comprehensive plan, it is only used for management of County-owned forest and recreation lands and programs.

## Surrounding County Efforts

Oneida County borders five other counties: Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Price, and Vilas Counties. These counties have prepared comprehensive plans, except for Price County. These plans are important to review, especially the land use maps. Additional planning efforts bordering Oneida County impact the County's land and water as well. For example, the Wisconsin River Watershed crosses into Oneida County from Vilas County.

No major land use conflicts have been identified; however, discussions with adjoining communities are important to be aware of development or other issues before they arise. The Intergovernmental Cooperation Chapter discusses issues related to surrounding and overlapping jurisdictions in detail.

## Local Planning Efforts

Local Comprehensive Plans of each municipality in Oneida County were used to "build" the County Comprehensive Plan, especially this Chapter's Future Land Use Map. Table 7-1 is an inventory of each municipality's Comprehensive Plan status. Since these plans must be updated

every 10 years, and not every Town has an updated plan adopted, the most recent version of each plan was used when available.

| Table 7-1 Local Comprehensive Plan Status | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Municipality | Original Adoption Date | Date of Latest Update | Plan Status |
| T. Cassian | 11/18/2019 | 6/13/2022 | Complete |
| T. Crescent | 1/9/2007 | 2/14/2024 | Complete |
| T. Enterprise* | 1/7/2010 | | See footnote |
| T. Hazelhurst | 8/1/1999 | 1/18/2018 | Complete |
| T. Lake Tomahawk | 9/1/2009 | | Overdue |
| T. Little Rice* | 12/29/2009 | 3/8/2016 | Complete |
| T. Lynne* | 12/8/2009 | | See footnote |
| T. Minocqua | 7/20/2010 | | Overdue |
| T. Monico | 1/1/2010 | 4/4/2022 | Complete |
| T. Newbold | 9/1/2008 | 1/13/2022 | Complete |
| T. Nokomis* | 12/30/2009 | | See footnote |
| T. Pelican | 12/1/2009 | 11/11/2019 | Complete |
| T. Piehl | 12/10/2009 | | Overdue |
| T. Pine Lake | 10/1/2003 | 11/15/2017 | Complete |
| C. Rhinelander | 1/9/2008 | 12/12/2016 | Complete |
| T. Schoepke* | 4/13/2010 | | See footnote |
| T. Stella | ? | 12/13/2022 | Complete |
| T. Sugar Camp* | 12/22/2009 | | See footnote |
| T. Three Lakes | 12/15/2009 | 9/2/2014 | Complete |
| T. Woodboro | 4/14/2009 | 10/15/2019 | Complete |
| T. Woodruff | 9/16/2009 | | Overdue |
| **\*Adopted as a "Coordination Plan."** | | | |
| *Source: Wisconsin DOA, Oneida County Planning and Zoning* | | | |

## State Planning Efforts

The state is involved in a variety of planning efforts that impact Oneida County. Examples include two chapters of "the Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin," which are the Northern Highland and North Central Forest. These ecological landscapes have plans that are drafted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and adopted by the Natural Resources Board to manage state-owned properties in these regions in an ecologically appropriate manner. They can be viewed on WDNR's website. Other state plans include those from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) that describe how roads, trails, and other forms of transportation are managed, which can influence land development patterns.

## Issues

According to the County's 2013, plan there were three predicted land use trends:

- Conversion of seasonal to permanent residences will increase as the baby boomer generation moves to the County as a retirement destination.
- Waterfront development pressure and cost of shoreline property will continue to increase, as fewer lakefront properties are available.
- Large, privately owned parcels adjacent to lakes will likely face development pressure for subdivisions.

Additionally, solar energy is becoming more common in Wisconsin, which impacts land use.

# Inventory and Trends

The inventory and trends section identifies the County's land uses. It also looks at the change over the last twenty years and makes projections into the future. The element relies on many things discussed in earlier elements, such as population and natural resources.

## Overview of Natural Landscape

Chapter 2 contains an extensive description of Oneida County's natural landscape. Overall, the County is known for its scattered forests and lakes which draw tourists and seasonal residents. Large tracts of forest are a result of county, state, and federal forests. Chapter 2 also describes the amount of land in public ownership.

## Overview of the Built Environment

Oneida County features extensive low-density, rural development throughout the County, with extensive undeveloped land. Development is primarily clustered along main highways, especially in the City of Rhinelander and Towns of Lake Tomahawk, Three Lakes, and Minocqua.

### *Existing Land use*

Woodlands dominate the County's landscape, comprising 80 percent of total acreage. Out of the developed land use categories, residential occupies the most acreage, for a total of 3.7% of the County's area. Open lands and water make up another 12.1% of the County's land area, and all other uses are 2.4% or less of the County's total acreage. See Table 7-2.

| Table 7-2 Countywide Existing Land Use | |
|---|---|
| **Land Use** | **Percent of Total** |
| Agriculture | 2.0% |
| Commercial | 0.3% |
| Cranberry Bog | 0.2% |
| Governmental / Institutional | 0.2% |
| Industrial | 0.2% |
| Open Lands | 2.3% |
| Outdoor Recreation | 0.4% |
| Residential | 3.7% |
| Transportation | 0.9% |
| Utility | 0.0% |
| Water | 9.8% |
| Woodlands | 80.0% |
| **Total** | **100.0%** |
| *Source: NCWRPC* | |

*Land Breakdown*

The County's total area is approximately 790,700 acres. See Table 7-3 for a list of all municipalities and their size relative to the County. The Town of Minocqua is the largest municipality by area, and the City of Rhinelander is the smallest.

| Table 7-3: Land Area by Municipality | |
| --- | --- |
| Municipality | Percent of Total |
| Town of Cassian | 5.5% |
| Town of Crescent | 2.6% |
| Town of Enterprise | 4.8% |
| Town of Hazelhurst | 2.8% |
| Town of Lake Tomahawk | 3.2% |
| Town of Little Rice | 6.0% |
| Town of Lynne | 5.9% |
| Town of Minocqua | 13.6% |
| Town of Monico | 4.4% |
| Town of Newbold | 7.5% |
| Town of Nokomis | 3.0% |
| Town of Pelican | 4.4% |
| Town of Piehl | 3.1% |
| Town of Pine Lake | 3.6% |
| Town of Schoepke | 4.1% |
| Town of Stella | 3.0% |
| Town of Sugar Camp | 7.9% |
| Town of Three Lakes | 8.1% |
| Town of Woodboro | 3.0% |
| Town of Woodruff | 2.9% |
| City of Rhinelander | 0.7% |
| **Oneida County** | **100.0%** |
| *Source: NCWRPC* | |

## *Real Estate Values*

## Equalized Values

Over the past 23 years, there has been a substantial increase in real estate value in every municipality in the County. Countywide, this growth was 196.4% between 2000 and 2023 according to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (WDOR). Table 7-4 summarizes this data and breaks it down by municipality, though it is not adjusted for inflation. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), inflation increased 77% between January 2000 and January 2023. Therefore, most of the County saw an increase in equalized real estate value that greatly surpassed the rate of inflation. See Table 2-3 in Chapter 2 for a summary of land acreage and percentage for tax exempt lands, reduced tax lands, and fully taxable lands in Oneida County.

| Table 7-4: Equalized Real Estate Values | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Minor Civil Division | 2000 | 2010 | 2023 | 2000-2023 % Change |
| T. Cassian | $121,698,800 | $280,263,700 | $375,264,900 | 208.4% |
| T. Crescent | $151,220,100 | $289,353,500 | $357,853,000 | 136.6% |
| T. Enterprise | $51,314,800 | $101,492,900 | $135,633,600 | 164.3% |
| T. Hazelhurst | $177,543,700 | $384,274,900 | $574,911,500 | 223.8% |
| T. Lake Tomahawk | $118,970,200 | $230,920,100 | $386,081,300 | 224.5% |
| T. Little Rice | $26,414,000 | $68,197,900 | $119,136,100 | 351.0% |
| T. Lynne | $15,302,100 | $34,120,600 | $51,146,400 | 234.2% |
| T. Minocqua | $826,088,000 | $1,754,154,600 | $2,925,762,100 | 254.2% |
| T. Monico | $14,270,000 | $27,404,500 | $41,341,200 | 189.7% |
| T. Newbold | $283,983,200 | $543,204,900 | $691,208,600 | 143.4% |
| T. Nokomis | $130,348,700 | $271,122,700 | $426,308,500 | 227.1% |
| T. Pelican | $187,115,600 | $316,417,500 | $431,953,600 | 130.8% |
| T. Piehl | $5,637,500 | $16,255,300 | $22,522,800 | 299.5% |
| T. Pine Lake | $167,246,700 | $295,149,800 | $427,661,700 | 155.7% |
| C. Rhinelander | $412,493,700 | $591,178,400 | $793,165,800 | 92.3% |
| T. Schoepke | $63,010,400 | $123,508,100 | $181,709,100 | 188.4% |
| T. Stella | $47,458,000 | $87,617,700 | $117,034,400 | 146.6% |
| T. Sugar Camp | $181,765,300 | $391,922,200 | $659,793,100 | 263.0% |
| T. Three Lakes | $469,174,200 | $1,001,411,800 | $1,432,460,400 | 205.3% |
| T. Woodboro | $86,852,300 | $183,799,100 | $262,455,400 | 202.2% |
| T. Woodruff | $176,106,100 | $338,394,300 | $594,258,600 | 237.4% |
| Oneida County | $3,714,013,400 | $7,330,164,500 | $11,007,662,100 | 196.4% |
| Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue | | | | |

## *Opportunities for Redevelopment and Growth*

The most efficient development utilizes existing public services and infrastructure, which are typically only found in incorporated communities. However, agreements to extend utilities can exist between incorporated and unincorporated communities, especially for water and sewer, which are required for some of development. Currently, most existing services are located in the City of Rhinelander, Town of Minocqua, Town of Three Lakes, Town of Lake Tomahawk, and Town of Woodruff.

The use of existing infrastructure and services is more cost-effective, and new commercial, industrial, and higher density residential development should be in these areas. Local plans identify areas already served and those areas that are most efficiently served by existing infrastructure

and services. Areas where sewer, water, and other infrastructure and services are not available should have minimal industrial and commercial development and only scattered residential development where appropriate.

## *Demographics Affecting Land Use*

Population, housing, and employment are critical demographic factors that influence land use patterns. To examine future land use needs, projections were completed for population, housing units, and employment. The result provides projections for the future number of additional persons, housing units, and jobs that will be added to the County.

The population of Oneida County has continued to grow over the last several decades. In 2020, there were over 36,700 people living in the County. Between 2000 and 2020, the population grew by about 2.9%. Between 2000 and 2021, jobs decreased by 1.3% and housing increased by 14.5%. The larger increase in housing units relative to the job decrease is due to a decrease in household size and presence of retired empty nesters. Population, employment, and housing all impact land use.

## Population

Population density is an indicator that compares the number of people occupying a specific geographic area. A rural area would have fewer people per square mile, while an urban area would have more people per square mile. Table 7-5 shows the number of people per square mile. The countywide total of 30.6 people per square mile is much lower than the statewide average of 89.6.

## Housing

Similar to population, the number of housing units per square mile is also displayed in Table 7-5. The Countywide housing density of 21.6 is considerably lower than the statewide average of 41.5. This is typical in rural areas when compared to the state as a whole.

## Employment

As discussed in Chapter 6, employment in Oneida County is expected increase by 9% over the next decade, for an estimated total of 1,373 new jobs added between 2021 and 2031. Jobs in educational services are expected to grow the most (32%), followed by manufacturing (25%), and wholesale trade (24%). These jobs will benefit from partnerships with local educational institutions as well as proximity to natural resources and transportation infrastructure.

| Table 7-5: Density | | |
|---|---|---|
| Municipality | People per Square Mile | Housing Units per Square Mile |
| Town of Cassian | 15.7 | 15.5 |
| Town of Crescent | 61.4 | 41.5 |
| Town of Enterprise | 6.0 | 8.1 |
| Town of Hazelhurst | 37.0 | 35.9 |
| Town of Lake Tomahawk | 29.3 | 27.7 |
| Town of Little Rice | 5.3 | 7.0 |
| Town of Lynne | 1.9 | 4.9 |
| Town of Minocqua | 30.1 | 29.1 |
| Town of Monico | 4.8 | 5.0 |
| Town of Newbold | 30.4 | 26.5 |
| Town of Nokomis | 37.2 | 33.0 |
| Town of Pelican | 52.2 | 31.5 |
| Town of Piehl | 1.9 | 3.2 |
| Town of Pine Lake | 60.8 | 37.0 |
| Town of Schoepke | 7.7 | 12.6 |
| Town of Stella | 15.4 | 10.8 |
| Town of Sugar Camp | 18.6 | 17.0 |
| Town of Three Lakes | 24.1 | 29.5 |
| Town of Woodboro | 21.8 | 20.1 |
| Town of Woodruff | 57.6 | 46.6 |
| City of Rhinelander | 970.3 | 514.3 |
| **Oneida County** | **30.6** | **21.6** |
| *Source: NCWRPC* | | |

## Land Demand

Land demand is projected in Table 7-6. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) has population projections for 2025, 2030, 2035, and 2040. Based on the existing density of 0.77 residential acres per person, 0.07 commercial acres per person, and 0.04 industrial acres per person, land demand and total population are expected to peak in 2030. This means that the County could expect another 2,140 residents between 2020 and 2030, requiring 816 acres for residential development, 74 acres for commercial development, and 42 acres for industrial development between 2020 and 2030. Due to smaller families and an aging American population, population is then expected to decrease slightly after 2030. Although much of the land in Oneida County is publicly owned, there is sufficient undeveloped land to meet the need for the potential 1,883 acres of development by 2030.

| Table 7-6 Land Demand in Acres | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Future Demand** | **2025** | **2030** | **2035** | **2040** |
| WDOA Population Projections | 38,905 | 39,985 | 39,745 | 38,500 |
| Additional Residents | 1,060 | 2,140 | 1,900 | 655 |
| Residential Acres (0.77 acres/person) | 816 | 1,648 | 1,463 | 504 |
| Commercial Acres (0.07 acres/person) | 74 | 150 | 133 | 46 |
| Industrial Acres (0.04 acres/person) | 42 | 86 | 76 | 26 |
| **Total Acres Needed by Year** | **933** | **1,883** | **1,672** | **576** |
| *Source: WDOA, NCWRPC* | | | | |

The 2020 Census estimated the County's population at 37,845, compared to the WDOA's projection for 2020, which was 37,265. Since 580 more residents were counted in Oneida County than initially projected, demand in the future could be slightly higher than what is predicted by WDOA's projections. But they are included since the State of Wisconsin recognizes them as the official projections.

## Future Land Use

The future land use map is a collection of each municipality's individual future land use maps. This plan does not change the zoning or land use classification of any parcel in the County but brings them together into one map for reference. The future land use map is different than zoning maps, and it assists staff and elected or appointed officials in reviewing requests for zoning changes. The map is advisory and does not have the authority of zoning, but it provides a vision of which parts of the county are suitable for different kinds of development so that infrastructure and services can be coordinated as the County develops. If land use changes at the local level are made, this County map should be updated to reflect them, since the County future land use map needs to match what each municipality has envisioned. The County map does not override the local maps if an error or inconsistency is found. See Map 7: Future Land Use.

## Future Land Use Categories

Agriculture

Although there is little agricultural area in Oneida County, this identifies areas used for farming as well as cranberry bogs.

Commercial (Business)

Identifies businesses and commercial areas that are not considered industrial.

Industrial

Includes industrial uses as well as active and abandoned mining operations.

Open Lands

Open lands are areas that have no development and are clear of large concentrations of trees, such as open wetlands or fallow farm fields.

Outdoor Recreation

These areas identify active, developed recreational areas like ball fields and playgrounds, rather than undeveloped areas used for recreational purposes (such as forests and lakes).

Residential

Identifies areas of housing of various densities such as small lakefront properties or large rural residential parcels. It does not include farmhouses, which fall under agricultural land use.

Transportation

This includes roads, rail corridors, airports, and other areas dedicated to transportation.

Woodlands

Identifies land where forest is the dominant land cover.

Water

Identifies areas with surface water present.


## *Land Use Tools*

The principal land use program in Wisconsin is the comprehensive planning program. The primary land use tools are zoning ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and official mapping.

## **Zoning**

Under Wisconsin Statutes, counties and local units of government are authorized to adopt zoning ordinances. Zoning is a method for implementing or carrying out the land use plan by predetermining a logical pattern of land use development. Oneida County administers zoning for all Towns except for the Towns of Enterprise, Monico, and Sugar Camp.

A zoning ordinance consists of a map and written text. The zoning map identifies districts or zones, such as agriculture, residential, commercial, or industrial. Within each of these districts, the text of zoning ordinance specifies the permitted land uses, the size of buildings, yard or lot dimensions, and other prerequisites in obtaining permission to develop. The goal of the zoning ordinance is to set a reasonable development pattern by keeping similar and related uses together

and separating dissimilar, unrelated, incompatible uses, particularly in relationship to transportation facilities, utilities and public services and facilities.

## Shoreland Zoning

Shoreland Zoning is administered by Oneida County in all unincorporated areas. All counties are mandated by Wisconsin law to adopt and administer a zoning ordinance that regulates development in shoreland and floodplain areas for the entire county outside of villages and cities in accordance with state shoreland zoning standards. Towns may apply their own zoning in shoreland areas if it does not impose requirements on matters regulated by a county.

## Farmland Preservation Zoning

Farmland preservation zoning is a voluntary zoning classification that is intended to minimize fragmentation of farmland by imposing development limitations consistent with or more restrictive than the provisions listed in Chapter 91 of WI Statutes. To adopt farmland preservation zoning, a municipality must by enrolled in the Farmland Preservation Program. Farmland Preservation Zoning is not currently utilized in Oneida County.

## Wellhead Protection

Wellhead Protection ordinances restrict the land use activities that take place within a certain radius of public wells to protect what is known as the "recharge" area. This ensures that contaminants like chemicals will not easily travel into groundwater and contaminate sources of drinking water. Oneida County does not currently have a wellhead protection ordinance. Municipalities may also adopt wellhead protection ordinances, such as the City of Rhinelander's ordinance.

## Land Division

Oneida County administers land division (or subdivision) ordinances in all unincorporated Towns. Subdivision regulation relates to the way in which land is divided and accessed. A community can control the subdivision of land by requiring a developer to meet certain conditions when recording a plat. While imposing conditions restricts the use of private property, the cumulative effect of land subdivision on the health, safety, and welfare of a community is so great as to justify public control of the process. There is some overlap between zoning and subdivision codes in terms of standards. Both ordinances, for example, can set minimum lot sizes.

## Official Mapping

An Official Map is a map adopted by a County that specifies locations of future roads and other utilities or public facilities, along with right-of-way widths and other specifications. When a land

division is approved, it must accommodate dimensions for future facilities according to the Official Map. Currently, Oneida County does not have an official map.

## Other Tools

Additional tools and approaches can be utilized by the County to achieve the goals of the plan. These include but are certainly not limited to the following: fee simple land acquisition, easements (purchased or volunteered), deed restrictions, land dedication, and ordinances or programs regulating activities such as impact fees, land division, building permits, and erosion control.

# Goals, Objectives, & Policies

**Goal 1:** Provide for a well-balanced mix of residential, business, industrial, recreational, forestry, and other uses to serve the future needs of Oneida County and to maintain the area as a desirable place to live and work.

## Objectives:

- Work with the Towns to guide the use, location, and density of development within both public and private lands consistent with the Oneida County Comprehensive Plan.
- Designate, maintain, and regulate an adequate quantity of suitable lands for future residential, commercial, forestry, industrial, recreational, and other uses in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and public input.
- Encourage the clustering of new business, residential, commercial, and industrial development into planned development areas to promote defined development districts, conserve resources, and maintain the character of the area.
- Encourage early identification of potential negative impacts from development proposals and promote strategies to minimize those impacts on neighbors, the community, and the natural resources.

## Policies:

- Consider the use, location, and density of development and how it affects the natural resources, community character, anticipated growth, and need for utilities and services.
- Development should be discouraged in environmentally sensitive areas, including wetlands and flood plains.
- Guide the location, mix, and quality of private development to meet both private and public land use demands.
- ~~Update land use regulations to better guide and manage the location, mix, quality, and impacts of development in the county.~~
- Land uses should be planned and approved for development in an orderly manner and avoid land use conflicts.
- Encourage infill development and redevelopment throughout the county, especially where facilities and services are avlaible, such as Brownfields.

**Goal 2:** Provide adequate infrastructure & public services, and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future demand for residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses.

**Objective:**

- Encourage new areas of growth within or near existing areas of development where adequate public facilities and services exist or are planned for expansion and where there is adjacent existing compatible development.

**Policies:**

- Assure that the pace of development does not exceed the capacity of utilities, roads, and community facilities and services.
- Discourage sprawling, low-density development where there is no existing infrastructure and service capacity.
- New development should be responsible for paying for the cost of any new infrastructure costs required for that development.
- All locally adopted plans should strive to be complimentary with and seek to minimize conflicts with other levels of government and implementation tools.
- Work with Towns to develop and update individual comprehensive or coordination plans and create or modify implementation tools to reflect the future needs of their communities.

**Goal 3:** Maintain and update the County Comprehensive Plan.

**Objectives:**

- All comprehensive plans should strive to maximize public input in their planning efforts.
- Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.
- Promote flexibility in the plan.
- Establish on-going communication with each Town.

**Policies:**

- Work cooperatively with the Towns to promote coordinated land use and a compatible development pattern that respects private property rights.
- Establish a policy on the relationship between the county and town plans as it relates to plan implementation.
- Establish a policy to ensure Towns are providing all plan amendments and updates to the county for incorporation into the County Comprehensive Plan.
- The County will maintain the County Comprehensive Plan, which will serve as a guide for future land use and zoning decisions.
- New development and redevelopment will be permitted based on consideration of this Plan.